

*The Law of Productiveness in Spiritual*  
*Husbandry*

ANNUAL SERMON

BEFORE THE

American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions

DELIVERED WEDNESDAY EVENING

OCTOBER 8, 1890

BY THE

REV. ARTHUR LITTLE, D.D.

---

BOSTON

THOMAS TODD, PRINTER, CONGREGATIONAL HOUSE  
CORNER BEACON AND SOMERSET STREETS.

1890



*The Law of Productiveness in Spiritual*  
*Husbandry*

ANNUAL SERMON

BEFORE THE

American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions

DELIVERED WEDNESDAY EVENING

OCTOBER 8, 1890

BY THE

REV. ARTHUR LITTLE, D.D.

---

BOSTON

THOMAS TODD, PRINTER, CONGREGATIONAL HOUSE  
CORNER BEACON AND SOMERSET STREETS.

1890



# SERMON.

---

“VERILY, VERILY, I SAY UNTO YOU, EXCEPT A CORN OF WHEAT FALL INTO THE GROUND AND DIE, IT ABIDETH ALONE: BUT IF IT DIE, IT BRINGETH FORTH MUCH FRUIT.”—*John xii: 24.*

A FEW days before the close of Christ's earthly ministry, certain Greeks, present at the feast, desired to see him. The text is the startling paradox with which this desire was met. “Such words as these,” says Dr. De Pressensé, “would be readily understood by the sons of Greece, who had probably assisted at the great mysteries of Eleusis, which represented the immortality of the soul under the image of a grain of wheat buried in the earth to germinate.”

What a world of interest centers in a grain of wheat! The sun, the great life-giver; the earth, the great life-nourisher; the rain and air, the gentle ministers of both; all under the divine control—are doing a work with a grain of wheat which you and I not only cannot do, but cannot even understand. Science, at its best, is dumb in the presence of a corn of wheat dying that it may live. And yet, utilized by one who never studied biology or chemistry, this dying grain of wheat becomes the symbol of an eternal truth, and throws a gleam of light upon the mystery of life. Upon its *surface*, it seems to be a bold antithesis. “Except a corn of wheat die, it abideth alone: if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” Barrenness, living; fruitfulness, dying. Death the condition of life; burial, of productiveness. Not so, according to *our* philosophy; but precisely this, according to the divine economy.

*The law of productiveness in spiritual husbandry* is the salient thought of the text. This is my theme tonight.

## I. THE MEANING OF THE PRINCIPLE INVOLVED.

What truth does this enigma conceal? Summer out of winter; fertility out of decay; warmth out of ashes; victory out of defeat; hope out of despair; life out of death. Who shall unfold the mystery and make the meaning plain? Who shall tell us how it is

that "the tones of melodious death song end in more melodious tones of birth song?" Only with utmost reserve may one venture to act as interpreter of such a truth. Its height, and depth, and length, and breadth, we may not hope to comprehend. Alone, living; fruitful, dying. This suggests a process, not a result; a means, not an end; a condition, not a consummation. The dying is ancillary, not ultimate. Doubtless the main thought is that of total self-surrender, but not as an end in itself — death, indeed, but not for the sake of death and the extinction of the powers, but death for the sake of life and the enrichment of all the powers. It is, therefore, quite at the opposite pole from asceticism, self-immolation, and all those pagan austerities which seek the multiplication of merit by the multiplication of tortures, and tend only to degradation and ruin. Whether it can be readily defined or not, it is always an ascendant movement, always means gain, always augments manhood. It is the law of self-sacrifice — prevalent everywhere — written even in nature. "It has come to be recognized," says one writer, "as the highest moral law. Altruism is but another name for it."

This answer of Jesus to the Greeks means very much more than the *mere surrender of mortal life*. It sometimes involves far less sacrifice to die than to live.

"If but the tedious battle could be fought,  
With Sparta's heroes, at one rocky pass,  
One day be spent in dying, men had sought  
The spot and been cut down like mower's grass.

"If in the heart of nature we might strive,  
Challenge to *single* combat the great power,  
Welcome the conflict! But, no; half alive,  
We skirmish with our foe long hour by hour."

Almost any one might be tempted to devote a day to becoming a hero. But this life-long skirmish with the foe is often the severest test of character, and involves the pain and sacrifice of a hundred deaths.

This recondite utterance of Jesus is the assertion of the universal law of equivalents, which makes the getting of something for nothing, impossible. Doing and being always involve cost — cost exactly graduated to the value of the result — even life itself for the highest product. There is no cheap way of success meas-



ured by the standard of righteousness; no easy bound to eminence; no dexterous method by which law can be circumvented, and a harvest secured without toil. All along the ascending scale of achievement, from the growing of a field of wheat to the redemption of a lost world, the inexorable law is expenditure proportionate to the result. We discover this law written in these words: "He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." It is the behest of love, which leaves out of its reckoning all thought of return, and pours itself lavishly out for others. It is simply the doctrine of the cross, which stands as a demonstration to the ages that selfishness always ends in defeat; self-sacrifice in victory.

As the text suggests, this law pervades the vegetable kingdom. The seed dies and gives its life to the blade. The blade dies in maturing the stock. The stock dies in bringing to perfection the fruit. The verdure of this year, having fulfilled its mission and brightened the autumnal days with its departing splendors, kindly consents to die, that from its death, after the long sleep of winter, may spring up a richer, fuller, more affluent growth, to gladden the year to come.

The recent discussions in the fascinating science of biology make it clear that death is the condition of all *life of the body*. Every step taken, every blow struck, every tear shed, every thought produced, is attended by the destruction of tissue—a pulling down and building up process. So that the apostle's declaration, "I die daily," is true in a far more literal and less heroic sense than was intended when it was spoken. "All work," says Mr. Huxley, "implies waste. Every word uttered by a speaker costs him so much loss; and, in the strictest sense, he burns, that others may have light. So much eloquence, so much of his body resolved into poisonous acids and water." And so it comes to pass that we live by dying; and when we cease to die, we cease to live; and the more we die, the more we live. Life is a continuous conflagration, and how swiftly to the socket do many lives now burn!

The principle suggests the secret of all successful business enterprise. It is the risking of the seed in the hope of the harvest. The foundations of the largest buildings, the largest fortunes, and the largest characters, are laid laboriously out of sight.

In the higher realm of thought this same inexorable law of life out of death prevails. This is the condition of all mental

productiveness worthy of the name. Whatever is vital, inspiring, immortal, in literature and art, has come to us through death agonies, is stained with heart's blood. Genius is imagined, by those who lack it, to be perfect ease of accomplishment; and for that reason it is called genius. But solitude is its dwelling-place. It works alone, and eludes observation. Who, then, can ever know in what fervors, and white-heat struggles, and birth-agonies, the transcendent products of the human mind have been created and flung, with all their wealth of blessing, too often, upon an unsympathetic age? The product only is visible. The process is concealed. Think you the "Divine Comedy," "Sistine Madonna," and "In Memoriam" were jauntily tossed off, of a leisure afternoon, as the average editorial is hastily prepared every day in the year? Far enough from that. Daughters of pain they were, and, therefore, dowered with the gift of immortality.

But it is in the moral and spiritual realm that the paradox of the text finds its amplest illustration. Here, first of all, is the secret of discipleship. We must die unto sin in order to live unto holiness. The flaming sword still guards the gates of paradise, and only they enter who are willing to allow its glittering blade to pierce and slay the old, bad life of sin and selfishness.

Here, too, lies the secret of all heroism. But for this principle, there had been no martyrs, no confessors, no cloud of witnesses to compass us about. What a dead level of selfishness human history would be, unrelieved by these occasional mountain peaks of generous self-sacrifice! Happily, all along the ages there have been a few men and women who have not loved their lives unto death — those of whom the world has not been worthy, whose lives have been "like gates of steel fronting the sun," and throwing an occasional gleam of light and cheer into the abounding darkness of ignorance and sin. Beacon lights, their names are household words — part of the common heritage of the race — used as rallying cries in times that make special demands upon faith, courage, and loyalty. They are the "dead but sceptered sovereigns who rule our spirits from their urns." Well, what of them? What is their claim to this perennial honor? Simply this. They loved truth and righteousness, and country, and God, better than themselves, and had the courage of their convictions. Firm they stood when others faltered. Freely they gave, when others withheld. Truly they spoke, when others equivocated. Bravely they died,



when others surrendered. They did not think of fame, or fortune, or life, or perpetual remembrance, or anything, save duty; but they became famous, and their deeds monumental. The alabaster box of precious ointment, broken under the unerring impulse of supreme devotion to the Master, has sent its subtle perfume through all the Christian centuries. Such lives have become fecund, fruitful; and the causes for which they were laid down have become significant in proportion to the prodigality of the sacrifice. They have been

“Not like idle ore,  
But iron dug in central gloom,  
And heated hot by burning fears,  
And dipped in baths of hissing tears,  
And battered by the dints of doom  
To shape and use!”

The head of John the Baptist, in a charger, duly delivered, according to previous contract, to Herodias' daughter, did better service than before it was cut off; for that blood cried from the ground in tones a thousand-fold more startling than the voice in the wilderness. It was better, too, for the prophet, for it let him out of prison into glory. According to the established canons of rhetoric, the address of Stephen was very incomplete. And yet no orator ever concluded a discourse with a more eloquent climax. It aroused the malignest forces of hell, and invoked the swiftest interposition of Heaven. Saul never forgot it. Its echoes are still vibrating across the centuries, adding courage to cowardice in hours of great peril. Here has always lain the strength of martyrdom. It is the one factor which the enemy fails to reckon, or else reckons on the wrong side. It is a factor of incalculable power. Death not only sets the seal of sincerity to the testimony, but it is also an irresistible appeal to all the benign forces in the universe for righteous vindication, which, sooner or later, is sure to be heard and answered.

In this surprising way, the blood of martyrs enriches whole epochs, and makes them quick with the seeds of a kindlier and more beneficent sway. “Four shillings and eight pence for fagots to burn three Lollards” is the laconic entry in an ancient day-book. That seemed, doubtless, to those who made the purchase, to be a very cheap fire, and the destruction of three Lollards a very disastrous blow to liberty. But some items have been omit-

ted from the brief entry in the ledger. The record was made too soon. That fire has not yet ceased to burn, nor will it cease, until, in its incandescent, lambent flame, all tyranny and wrong shall be consumed, and eternal righteousness flash forth as from the Shekinah of the Infinite.

“These are the living lights  
That from our bold, green hights  
Shall shine afar,  
Till those who name the name  
Of freedom, to the flame  
Come, as the Magi came  
To Bethlehem’s star.”

From the days of Stephen until now, this has been the informing spirit in all the productive epochs of the Church. Progress has come through struggle. Victory has been snatched from apparent defeat. Professor Hitchcock, speaking of the persecutions under Decius and Diocletian, says, “These were times of awful agony — the two years of Decius, and the ten years of Diocletian — when the powerful Roman empire, shutting the gates of the amphitheater, leaped into the arena face to face with the Christian Church. When those gates were opened, the victorious Church went forth, with the baptism of blood on her saintly brow, bearing a new Christian empire in her fair, white arms.” And it may be added that, when this victorious Church became conscious of her newly acquired power, sought worldly aggrandizement by worldly methods, and forgot her mission — that is, tried to save her life — her beautiful garments were trailed in the dust, and her strength was gone. And this is a fair epitome of the Church’s history through all the centuries.

This spirit of total self-surrender for Christ’s sake and the gospel’s has been strikingly characteristic of *modern missions* from the day when Drachart, the Moravian, having been told that the Eskimos of Labrador would murder him, answered, “If they will kill me, they will kill me, but *go I must*,” to the day when Livingstone was found in his African hut, upon his knees, in the attitude of prayer, dead, having literally poured out his life a willing libation for the redemption of the Dark Continent.

The following utterances fairly represent the spirit of modern missionaries. The heroic Golat, of the French mission to the Senegal, left these farewell words: “Do not be discouraged if the first

laborers fall in the field. Their graves will mark the way for their successors, who will march past them with great strides." The last words of Adam McCall, of the African mission, were these: "Lord, I gave myself, body and soul and spirit, to thee. I consecrated my whole life to thy service; and now if it please thee to take myself instead of the work which I would do for thee, what is that to me? *Thy* will be done." Melville Cox asked to have this inscription on his tombstone: "Though a thousand fall, let not Africa be given up." Paton's reply, when told that he would surely be eaten by the cannibals whom he went to save, was this: "I have only once to die, and I am willing to leave the time and place and means in the hands of God, whom I seek to honor, whether in life or in death." This was most conspicuously the temper of the lamented Neesima. This was the spirit of the heroic Dr. and Mrs. Whitman, who saved to the republic the mighty empire of the Northwest, and so made our meeting what it is here tonight. This is the informing, inspiring characteristic of modern missions.

It is also true that days of bitter persecution have been days of great progress — sometimes the greatest — as in the case of the Armenians of Turkey, and the martyr church of Madagascar. This is the established law of conquest in Christ's kingdom. "Except the corn of wheat die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." This law has never been repealed, though it has often been forgotten. Secular and selfish methods have often been adopted, to end only in defeat. A church wearing the insignia and adopting the strategy of earthly kingdoms is a caricature of the true Church, and an ally of the devil. The true Church, the living, conquering Church, recognizing the real meaning of its blood-stained banner, holds itself evermore ready to die. Just here lies any propagative power it may have.

II. OBSERVE, IN THE SECOND PLACE, A FRESH BAPTISM INTO THIS SPIRIT OF FULL DEVOTEDNESS OF LIFE TO CHRIST IS THE NEED OF THE HOUR.

This law of productiveness demands instant recognition and enforcement. In this connection we discover the *one unrealized* factor in the great missionary movement of the century. The fields are white already to harvest. The resources of the Church, humanly speaking, are sufficient. The outfit and equipment are



complete. Of organization there is enough. Where is the *missing factor*? What detains the coming of the chariot of God? What is the latent, unused force that needs liberation in order to become almost omnipotent? It is this—the resistless force of consecrated human life and personality. Here lies the secret of rapid and successful conquest. Let a few considerations be mentioned that give saliency to this need.

1. *In deference to its original design, the Church needs to come into this range of high incentives.* Here, and here alone, it finds its proper environment. True to spiritual conceptions of its mission, and adhering to spiritual methods of conquest, it has all the resources of heaven at its command. Divested of earthly power, it will be invested with heavenly power. To its anointed vision the mountains will be full of horses and chariots of fire. The stars in their courses will be its helpful allies. Angels will become its ministering spirits. The gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Untrue to such conceptions and venturing to accept a lower standard, it is shorn of its strength and becomes an agency of weakness, if not of wickedness. Even a small body of disciples, thoroughly responsive to the divine leadership, in the spirit of lofty, uncalculating self-forgetfulness, would be invincible, verifying the subtle arithmetic of heaven, which declares that “one shall chase a thousand and two put ten thousand to flight,” and disclosing the fallacy of the vulgar arithmetic of earth, which avers that the heathen populations are increasing seventy times as fast as they are converted. For it has been most pertinently said: “The gain of three millions of Christians in a century from nothing is far greater than the gain of 200,000,000 from the 800,000,000 previously living. The one is a *creation*, the other is a *progression*.” Less mathematics and more faith would help us in all our Christian work. The words of Wesley are suggestive: “If I had three hundred men who feared nothing but God, hated nothing but sin, and were determined to know nothing save Jesus Christ and him crucified, I would set the world on fire.”

2. *In the interests of self-preservation, this spirit needs rekindling in the Church.* While the Church has been wonderfully enriching every department of secular life with its redeeming influence, it has, likewise, felt the reaction of this resistless secular life upon itself. Its danger now is suffocation in the stifling atmosphere of worldliness. It is a remark of Mr. Bryce, speaking of this country,

“that the atmosphere is over full of all that pertains to material progress.” The peril is measureless; the temptation is analogous to that which assailed the Lord Jesus in the wilderness. To apply to it a phrase of Carlyle, used in another connection, “Its life is an internecine warfare with the time spirit.” If the Church comes off, as its great Head did, *victorious*, it will be through its refusal to listen to any bland proposals of compromise. It is a remark of Professor Hitchcock, “that Christianity is embarrassed by being obliged to apologize for Christendom.” The Church’s safeguard against being overcome by the world lies in overcoming the world. Simply on the defensive, it will be destroyed. It must conquer or die, and it must die to conquer.

The words of ex-President Seelye are full of weight: “It is not simply a question for the Church whether missions are a helpful means for the salvation of the world. Her own salvation is intimately involved in the missionary cause. Indifference *within* the Church to the conversion of the world begets infidelity *outside*, and overwhelms the Church with reproaches which she has no means to repel. The missionary spirit is the normal development of the Christian life.” Says another writer of large experience and study: “The future safety of the Church depends upon her missionary advancement. The condition of the heathen world is the scandal that overshadows the fame of Jesus.”

It is not infidelity we have to fear, nor the organized resistance of heathenism, nor the hostility of the human heart, but inertia within the Church. “The Moslem power sprang from the ashes of an extinguished missionary fire; the Moslem power could never have arisen in the days of a living Church.”

3. *This fine, self-forgetting temper is needed now, in order to reassure the faith and courage of believing souls.* Days of fiery trial are before us. A virile type of Christian faith is demanded — tough, resonant, resilient, aggressive. The situation abroad, at present, is briefly indicated by two words — *opportunity, opposition*. Naturally, the strengthening of the Christian forces strengthens those of the other side; Christianity is becoming sufficiently powerful and aggressive in many places to invite increasing hostility. The battle now is not so much with carnal weapons as with the more subtle agencies of evil. “For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of the darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in



the heavenly places." The conflict is more and more in the realm of ideas. The school, the press, the neutral-tinted religionist, the diplomat, and the polished man of the world are on the ground, actively arrayed against the Christian faith. The old religions are bracing themselves for a fresh collision, while Christianity is a child in death-grapple with them. Increasing jealousy of foreign influence is seen in some quarters. The secular blessings of the gospel have so outrun the spiritual in some of those dark lands, that the latter are less eagerly desired now. It is a testing time. It will require the heroic quality of Christian faith to stand against all counterfeits, whether from this or other lands; the faith that knows how to die, but not how to surrender. When the aged Horatius was told that his son had fled from the combat which decided the supremacy between Alba and Rome, and, seeing his indignation, they asked him what his son should have done against three, the old man replied, "He should have died." And if, at such a time as this, we hold our peace, or prove unequal to the critical exigency before us, may not deliverance come from another quarter?

Dr. George Smith, Secretary of the Foreign Missionary Committee of the Free Church of Scotland, speaking, at the London Conference, of the utter spiritual barrenness of the eighteenth century, said "that the few godly people who sought to evangelize the world had to leave the Church practically, as the Pietists, Moravians, and Methodists." God forbid that a similar alternative should ever become necessary in this century. What an awful doom to an individual, a church, or a nation, to be denied the august privilege, through indifference, or sordidness, or unbelief, of helping to usher in the glorious day of Christ's reign on earth! Opportunity neglected is necessarily lost. Power abused is forfeited. An agency unequal to its task invites defeat. The candlesticks have heretofore been removed out of their place; they may be again; they will be when they no longer aid in the diffusion of light. The Church is now under a peremptory challenge to gird itself for the battle, to put on the whole armor of God — the armor of light — that, having done all, it may stand and repel all the fiery darts of the adversary.

4. *It may be added, once more, that this spirit needs cultivation among us in order to equalize the standard of Christian living at home and abroad.* No bi-metallic currency is permissible in the spiritual world. There is only one recognized coin of this higher realm —

the pure gold of Christian character. I have sometimes thought that we deal in a metal less refined than our brethren in foreign lands, as it has been less in the refining fire than theirs.

Concerning the missionaries of our Board, I am sure the remarks of Dr. Robert N. Cust at the London Conference are not applicable, when he says, "I cannot conceal from myself that, with the softening of the present century, there has come a relaxation of the fiber of our missionaries." The fiber of *our* missionaries seems to me to be tough and compact, without one whit of flabbiness in it. A noble body of men and women they are, quite worthy of the splendid succession into which they have come, gracefully wearing the mantle of departed heroes and saints, eminent examples of the spirit of the text. All honor to them! Their lives are to me a perpetual inspiration and rebuke. They are doing their utmost to realize the New Testament conception of Christian character in their fields of labor, and in doing this their lives are the most engaging factor. In a certain fine aroma of daily living — which is a sweet-smelling savor in the thought of Him who owns the sacrifice — am I wrong in thinking that our brethren abroad surpass us? It seems to me the tide rises higher on the foreign shore than on ours. Into all the crevices and bays and estuaries and open spaces of their being it seems to push, excluding the world and filling their lives with loving, self-denying service.

The advantage ought to be decidedly with us; for whatever be the subtle forces that lift the tides, they are a thousand-fold stronger in Christian than in Pagan lands. Paton speaks of "people who try to evangelize the world while sitting in easy chairs at home." It is to be hoped that this little bit of sarcasm does not apply to us. Such lassitude and laziness as easy chairs suggest are strikingly inconsonant with the intensely energetic temper of our people in all things else. It cannot be; and yet it is to be feared that we are not in the most strenuous and militant mood now. To say that the Church, as a body, is throwing itself with an abandon of self-sacrifice into the exigent service of evangelizing the world, would be an exaggeration. There is some color to the current remark that the Church is only "playing at missions." There is a certain infection of daintiness that does not suggest heroism. The missionary spirit gets the chills rather easily, and maintains a somewhat variable temperature.

Another sentiment from the lips of Mr. Cust, on the same occasion, will gain general assent, when, referring to those at home, he speaks of "more self-consecration, more entire abnegation of self, more sacrifice of pride, prejudice, and domestic comfort, more casting down of cherished idols, more laying of ourselves on His altar and submitting to His will." As far as possible (and that perhaps is not very far) ought we to be at one with those who go abroad, in any sacrifices made for Christ's sake—one in the fellowship of suffering. It is easy for me to believe that any depression of spirit they may feel is not so much when in their fields of labor as, upon their return from their scanty way of life and self-denying toil, to see the affluence and ease which we seem to covet and enjoy, even in the face of the trumpet-tongued and austere calls for help. Not envy, but sorrow, fills their hearts, because work into which their very lives have, with a self-forgetting lavishness, been poured, can be allowed to suffer, and because, amid such opulence, the word "retrenchment" can ever be allowed articulate utterance. When success foretokens curtailment, and prosperity invites contraction, the best incentives to earnest prayer and faithful labor are gone. Why plan stations to be abandoned, and train laboriously a native ministry that cannot be employed? Brethren, let us prefer death to such reproach. If we are willing to die, the reproach will be taken away. More than this; the type of piety at home, in these days of increasingly close neighborhood, will be the type of piety abroad. I remember to have heard the fear expressed by an earnest missionary from Japan, lest the easy-going religious life of this land should find its way across the sea to that island. Brethren, we are setting the fashion for the heathen world. There is no Occidental, no Oriental, but a universal, Christ, and all nations that accept him will, by a law of stable equilibrium, maintain eventually much the same standard of Christian thought and devotion. We are furnishing the mold in which the nations transformed by the gospel will almost certainly be cast, giving the key-note of new movements in decaying dynasties, establishing the norm of Christian empires and civilizations. Let it be the pattern shown on the mount and perfected at the cross.

5. *An adequate supply of men and money would be the swift and early fruitage from a soil enriched by the tears of sacrifice.* There is a fancy of the Greeks that the clay of which man was made was moistened not with water, but with tears. Men and



money; these are the foci of the ellipse around which all statement and argument move—the postulate and the climax of the most impassioned appeals. Of both, the Church has an abundant supply. The resources of language will scarcely admit of a more urgent or persuasive plea. The logic is unanswerable. The sensitive spirit shrinks from the pain of listening to such importunities. A feeble response is not the fault of the appeal. That needs no new emphasis, no amendment. Especially true is this in relation to money. The failure is not with the address, but with those addressed. It has been one of the distinctions of this Board that it has reckoned among its friends a large number of men and women, in the course of its honored history, who have not *waited* to be asked for their offering of children or money, to be devoted to the missionary cause. The gift of their choicest—that which cost them most—was in their daily thought and toil. They could not be restrained. For them perpetual solicitations would have been as *impertinent* as they would have been unnecessary. Farnsworth, Gates, Jones, whose faces and fellowships we sorely miss this evening, were among that goodly company. When every member of our churches is willing to die in order to live, is actuated by the spirit which allured the Lord Jesus to Gethsemane and the cross, it will become necessary, as at the building of the tabernacle, to restrain their liberality. Says Mr. Paton: “In all my addresses I strove to win the believer to a more consecrated life. For I knew that if I succeeded in these higher aims, the money would be freely laid upon the altar, too.” Too much of our effort is expended at the wrong end of the lever. Too often we toil at the point of sorest disadvantage. If we first present ourselves a living sacrifice unto the Lord, all the rest follows. A vivid realization, a thoughtful adoption of the New Testament conception of stewardship, which is essentially the doctrine of the text, would fill all the treasuries, and make special appeals almost an impertinence. Just here, to be somewhat personal, is the best opportunity afforded most of us for compliance with the sentiment of the text—that is, dying that we may bring forth much fruit. Die as to the pocket; die as to this mad, delusive and consuming race for wealth; die as to the ease and luxury into which money beguiles the unheroic soul; die as to the passion for mere accumulation and possession—the miser’s nemesis; nail to the cross the unhallowed lust for gold, and then live a large, fruitful, generous, glad, blessed

life of Christ-like service for others. Promise of exemption from trials does not attract, but repels, heroic souls. Young men, worthy of holding commissions in a service which might well be coveted by angels, will not be attracted by minimizing the hardships involved. Says Dr. Pierson, "When the martyr spirit is quenched, the missionary spirit will be found to have gone out in the same dying flame." In proportion as our appeals are kept on the high elevations, may swift responses for men and money be anticipated. The gifted Dr. Duff was responsive to appeals pitched in this sublime key when in reply to the committee he said: "Here am I; send me. The work is most arduous, but it is of God, and must prosper. Many sacrifices painful to flesh and blood must be made, but not any corresponding to the glory of winning souls to Christ. With the thought of this glory I feel myself almost transported with joy. Everything else appears to fall out of view as vain and insignificant. The missionary life! Ah! an archangel would come down from the throne, if he might, and feel himself honored to give up the felicities of heaven for a season, for the toils of a missionary's life. The missionary's work! The work of a minister at home is but the lighting of a family lamp to the causing of the sun to rise upon an empire that is yet in darkness. The missionary's grave is far more honorable than the minister's pulpit." That is the outburst of a soul enamored of the spirit of sacrifice for Christ's sake.

6. *But, of all the fruit which would be garnered, were we willing to die, the most precious, the most satisfying, would be a great harvest of souls.*

This is the consummation of all sacrifice. For such fruit as this, many, many hearts in all lands are eagerly longing, even as Christ longs to see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied. Distinctly may be now heard the angel of God crying with a loud voice, "Thrust in thy sickle and reap; for the time has come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe." Truly the reaping time seems to be at hand. Almost a century of seed-sowing has been done. And the fructifying element in that seed has been human lives. "The good seed are the children of the kingdom." How lavishly that precious seed has been scattered! but, thank God, not in vain! The work of preparation has been patiently, laboriously done. There are now tokens everywhere of the coming dawn. Almost in sight is the promised land. The old faiths are



waning. Said Dr. Post, of the Syrian Protestant College, before the London Conference, "Fetichism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Brahminism, are by no means eradicated and conquered, but I believe the decadence of these religions has already begun, and progressed far towards consummation; and I believe it will not be a single generation, or I hope not many generations, before they shall become a thing of the past." The fullness of time for a mighty coming in spiritual power of the world's Christ is at hand. The call from China for a thousand men in five years is significant.

The Word of God is widely circulated. Large expectancy prevails. Precious revivals are in progress. Young men and women in the schools at home are deeply in earnest. Those longest upon the field interpret the signs of the times as being full of promise. In the stirring appeal from the Shanghai Conference, they speak of "the vast and ripening harvest," and say that "the promise of ingathering is yearly brightening." Speaking a while ago in New York, Bishop Thoburn, thirty years in India, said, "We are nearer the heart of the heathen world today than you are near the heart of New York." Why does His chariot so long delay its coming? God calls, Christ pleads. The Holy Spirit continues to make intercessions with groanings that cannot be uttered. The Word is still surcharged with power. There is but one neglected factor—a Church not yet wholly consecrated to the Master's service; not wholly obedient to his dying command. The day that witnesses that full espousal will soon witness the victory. "The only department of human enterprise that does not seem to feel the quickening pulse of the nineteenth century is the missionary work of the Church, the noblest enterprise of all the ages, and most needing and inspiring a consecrated enthusiasm."

When you and I know what it means to pour out our souls unto death for others, to bear them as an unceasing burden on our hearts, to invest in them until it costs, until virtue goes out of us, identifying ourselves with them in their need as Moses did himself with his people, and Paul himself with his kinsmen, then will much fruit appear. That will be love's conquest. You remember how the cobbler missionary, Carey, before he left his bench, drew upon leather or brown paper a rude map of the world; and then as he pointed to the map, and his fingers rested on the vast areas given over to darkness and death shade, he would say, "These are pagan, and these are pagan, and these, and these, and these—

until, overcome with emotion, he wept aloud." So in that consecrated soul did the corn of wheat die and bring forth the first fruit of modern missions. It was love—the most fecund and prolific force in the universe—love for Christ and lost men—that prompted the generous sacrifice.

It is worthy of notice that whenever anything of supreme value is transpiring, somebody is dying. And how hallowed does that spot of earth become where man has died for his fellowman!

"They say that in some spots  
Where martyrs died or holy men once met  
Under the watchful sky to worship God,  
Sounds sweet as heaven are heard in every hour,  
Rising like fragrance from the sod, as if  
The soil had drunk the notes of holier days,  
And loved at times to give them out again,  
Sweetened with age, rich with unearthly peace."

When will Africa be redeemed? Not when its territory has all been parceled out to ambitious civilized nations; not when the arts and sciences and commerce have entered its borders; not even when the Bible has been put into its manifold languages and dialects—but when enough good men, like Livingstone, and Hannington, and Kemp, and Pinkerton, and Root, and like fifty others in Sierra Leone, within twenty years, have died there, thus having purchased the preëmption of the continent for Christ; and when, moreover, we who remain at home are enough burdened about Africa to die in spirit with them. John Williams and his young associate Harris were both clubbed to death, and eaten, within a few minutes of their landing on Erromango. Referring to this early martyrdom, Paton says: "Thus were the New Hebrides baptized with the blood of martyrs; and Christ told the whole Christian world that he claimed these islands as his own. His cross must yet be lifted up where the blood of his saints has been poured forth in his name." It is as if the standard-bearer, falling in the fight, were to give the colors to his comrade, with the request that he press forward to victory. When Headley Vicars fell, leading a charge in the Crimean war, with these words upon his dying lips—"This way 97th"—the 97th was invincible. The intrepid spirit which that courageous leader was that moment breathing out, his devoted followers must that moment have been breathing in, and, shall we add, multiplying a thousand-fold? Men like to follow the

leader who dies in front of them in the thickest of the fight. They like to take the standard from his dying hand and plant it on the ramparts of the enemy.

### III. THE REALIZATION OF THIS PRODUCTIVE ENERGY IN OUR OWN LIVES.

This is the supreme consideration of the evening. "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him. They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." What is required of ME in meeting the conditions here imposed?

Intensely personal is this question. It cannot be otherwise. All the great crises in human experience must be met *alone*. Most of all is dying a solitary act. There is no comradeship in that battle. In the secrecy of the closet and of the heart must any acceptable oblation be made. There, alone, must you and I taste the cup from which we shrink—and from drinking it, we do instinctively shrink. It is not pleasant to die. To become at once victim and executioner, and voluntarily to allow this comfortable, congested, self-centered life of ours to be nailed to the cross that it may thus be re-created, exalted and empowered for a nobler and diviner service, is far enough from being the habitual aspiration of our souls. Actually to realize this Christ-like ideal would be, for some of us, the enactment of a tragedy, or, at least, the inauguration of a revolution and the reëstablishment of a new order. Very likely, in cases not a few, the style of living, methods of business, conduct of social affairs, plans for travel, intentions concerning the children, expenditures of time, strength and money, would require radical readjustment, with the distinct and thoughtful purpose of touching a higher level, and holding the reconstructed life, with something of sturdiness, to a more worthy and more rewarding standard of action, under the inspiration of the cross. Men hold themselves ready to make any sacrifice for worldly advantage. What hecatombs of valuable lives are voluntarily found

"In the Temple of Mammon,  
Where is offered up  
To Gain—the Master idol of the Realm—  
Perpetual sacrifice!"



Upon that unhallowed altar millions lay their avaricious and sterile lives every year, in a bewildering passion for gold. We have an altar, too, consecrated by the blood of Him who suffered without the camp; and we do but follow in his footsteps when gladly to that sacred shrine we bring our costliest offering—even life itself. Ignatius stood in the arena, and as the lions rushed upon him, he calmly said: “I am grain of God. I must be ground between the teeth of lions, that I may make bread for His people.” The arena and the lions are incidents of a past age. But is there no place for Ignatius still? Yes. God’s people still suffer with a hunger which can only be appeased at just that cost. And martyrdom is still the guerdon of great souls.

This spirit, which has in it the promise of large fruitfulness, will come to be ours in proportion as the highest ends and highest motives are set and held distinctly before the soul. It is a suggestive remark of Bishop Westcott, “that self-sacrifice will enable us to take possession of a region of being which answers to the capacities of the soul.” That region ought to be occupied and cultivated. Ends and motives commensurate with the capacities of the soul will develop and empower these capacities.

A correction of the perspective of life may be necessary to bring the most inspiring and productive considerations within the range of vision. We are apt to fore-shorten the picture until it lacks those alluring and beckoning vistas that reach on into the eternal world, and so becomes commonplace and colorless. Let the horizon be enlarged. Push back this sensuous environment. Let things unseen and eternal be brought into the foreground. The storage of the best motive power for the improvement of *this* world is pavilioned in the world to come. You find it when you find the hidings of God’s power.

Moses endured as seeing Him who is invisible, and so did all the other saints who are enrolled in the same immortal fellowship. They felt the power of an indissoluble life. There is a legend concerning Moses, that when he was three years old, the princess put him in her father’s arms, and he, to please her, set the crown on the child’s head; but Moses threw it off, and springing to the ground, trod on it. This legend of his childhood is a feeble picture of a tremendous fact in his manhood. The refusals of life! The conditions of heroic achievements are the same today. “Faith, which is the assurance of things hoped for, the proving of things

not seen," is now, as in the olden time, the secret of every memorable conquest in the history of the Church of God. It appropriates the same transcendent motives now that stirred the hearts of patriarchs, prophets, apostles, confessors, and martyrs, and continues the bright succession.

In my more recent study of the Acts of the Apostles, a few salient facts have especially arrested my attention. They are such as these: On the one hand, the prevalence of paganism in its vilest form, concentrated in great cities; the most persistent organized opposition, both in Church and State, to the gospel; the most relentless persecution; the powers of evil rampant and full of rage; all the recognized forces in society against truth and righteousness. On the other hand, a few humble but eager disciples, every hour exposed to death, but also every hour full of a nameless joy; the amazing power of the Scriptures; the boldness of utterance; the leadership of Jehovah as if he were present in person on the field with proffers of instantaneous help; and a steady, rapid, triumphant march, apparently quickened by obstacles, to victory. In this book the name of the Triune God, in some form, is more than three hundred times mentioned; so that it is really a history of *God's* movement through Asia Minor from the year 33 to 63 A. D., or, The Thirty Years' War of Jehovah against Paganism.

The old-time history has a modern parallel. Practically the same conditions exist today. If in upon the Christian Church could be borne this hour the same vivid sense of man's lost condition, of Christ's love, of the gospel's power, of the Spirit's presence, of the efficacy of prayer, of the communion of saints, of the divine interposition, of the urgency of the call to immediate repentance, that filled and fired the hearts of the apostles, triumphs far greater and grander than those inaugurated on the day of Pentecost would salute our expectant vision. The *secret* of such victories is disclosed to us in the words of the apostle Paul when he says: "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live. And yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." And these: "But I hold not my life of any account, as dear unto myself, so that I may accomplish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." The productive power of such a life is beyond all calculation, because it has in it the factor of infinity. When *we* are willing to die, then Christ



at once lives in us, and "of his fulness all we receive, and grace for grace." "I might have my hand full of truth," said Fontenelle, "and I open only my little finger." When the Church might have its hand full, it stretches timidly out its little finger; and that, too, in the presence of Him whose supreme delight it is to give, and who, in the plenitude of his grace, puts all the resources of heaven at our command. How long, pray tell me, can we who profess to love the Lord Jesus Christ listen, unmoved, to such utterances as the following? "Unless reënforced soon, our kingdom will be taken from us." "The effort must be swift and earnest." "Souls are perishing for lack of the Lord's money." "The work demands expansion, not retrenchment." "The times are fully ripe for an onward movement." "Staggering alone under a crushing burden." "We know not how to meet the emergency." "The work calls for enlargement, the Board for retrenchment." We have assembled here this week in Christ's name to frame the response which shall be sent across the seas, in answer to these almost despairing cries for help. Brethren, what shall our answer be? When they ask for bread, shall we give them a stone? When "yes" means success, and "no" failure, shall we say "*No?*" There never was a moment in the history of this Board more heavily freighted with responsibility than the present. It may well appall us. It may well humble us. It may well drive us to our knees. It may well embolden and inspire us. The welfare of all our missionary work seems to be pivoted largely on the purposes and action consummated here. This is the supreme hour to devise great things; to rise, in the might of a new-born faith and hope and enthusiasm, to a hitherto unattained height of self-sacrificing devotion to our Lord and Master; to plan things on a scale of *maximum*, and *not of minimum*, achievement; to accept these majestic auguries of the breaking day as from the Lord himself, and greet them with a prodigality of surrender and effort worthy of Him who honors us with a service so sublime. For a pagan emperor to fiddle while the capital of his empire was burning was an innocent diversion in comparison with the conduct of Christian ambassadors, under a divine and strenuous commission to evangelize the world, if they hesitate, and doubt, and dally, and delay, and solace their consciences with pleasant lullabies, while millions of immortal souls are every year going down to eternal death. Brethren, the Church of God is postponing the millennium, when its supreme

business is to hasten its coming. One can almost seem to hear the Saviour say of it, as of the fig tree in the vineyard, "Lord, let it alone this year also." Fruit, fruit, much fruit! For this the heart of our ever-living Saviour unceasingly longs. For this he patiently, lovingly waits, before he speaks the dreadful word of doom, "Cut it down." I am sure there is no such dreadful word reserved for us to hear. Let us rather hope that Pentecostal blessings are at hand. The closing years of this century, tremulously alive with interest in missions, ought to be signalized by a great ingathering of souls to the praise and glory of Him who sends the reapers forth, and crowns their labors with his benediction.

Under God, it is for us who are here this evening to say what the harvest shall be — whether thirty, sixty, or an hundred fold. The Congo River, whose sources are hidden among the mountains of Africa, in its swift descent over the rocks and terraces and precipices that obstruct its pathway to the coast, accumulates such tremendous volume and momentum, that, forming no delta at its mouth, with resistless, propulsive force, it pushes its assertive way three hundred miles out into the open sea. God grant that, during these hallowed days of fellowship and prayer, we, dear brethren, may be lifted by his quickening Spirit to such mountain tops of love and sacrifice that the hitherto sluggish current of our lives, augmented and energized, may carry us by a wind of irresistible divine compulsion, quite beyond the narrow continent of self, out into the dark, raging sea of sin and death, in whose remorseless waves so many of our fellowmen are almost hopelessly immersed, and constrain us to be to them the swift, willing, eager bearers of the message of eternal life! Help us this very hour, O Christ, to receive the Holy Ghost!











